REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 1, 2, 3-8 and 10-13 are active in the case.

The Examiner is thanked for the courteous interviews conducted on September 15 and 16, 2003 in which the issues in the case were clarified. The Examiner and SPE agreed that the comparative showing in the specification supported a claim of the scope of Claim 1 in which the release agent was defined as 0.01 to 0.25 % by weight of stearyl alcohol. This embodiment has been added as new Claim 13. Claim 3 has been canceled and rewritten as new Claim 12 in which the copolymer a) is recited as having from 1 to 50 % by weight of methacrylic acid, the limitation of canceled Claim 3. Claim 10 has been amended to put it in more readable form by a change in punctuation and the deletion of "thereon" and substitution of the more accurate term "therein,". No new matter has been added into the amended claims or new claims.

It is requested that this amendment be entered, since Claim 12 is canceled Claim 3 rewritten in independent form and Claim 13 recites allowable subject matter agreed to at the interview.

The rejection of Claims 1-8, 10 and 11 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Lehmann et al. in view of Vetter et al. is traversed.

In the Official Action the Examiner admits that Lehmann et al. does not teach or suggest that the copolymer melt is devolatilized by extrusion. The Examiner further states that Vetter teaches a method of processing plastic melts wherein the plastic is poly(methylmethacrylate) and the melt is subject to extrusion to devolatilize the melt, citing column 5, line 13 through column 6, line 6. However, it can be seen in the cited section that the mixture referred to is a melt of polymethylmethacrylate and treatment agent by which a reaction is produced to arrive at poly-(methacrylalkylimide) plastics and is not directed to the devolatilization of poly(methylmethacrylate) polymer alone. See column 5, lines 13-20.

Further, all the examples are directed also to the devolatilization of poly-(methacrylalkylimide) plastics and not to poly(methylmethacrylate) polymers alone.

As discussed in the previous response, Vetter et al. mentioned the possibility in column 3, lines 29-37 of removal of residual monomers from poly(methylmethacrylate) by adding water as a carrier agent. This positive addition of water in Vetter et al. is different from the situation in the present invention in which devolatilization is discussed on page 12 of the specification as leading to the more substantial removal of low-boiling constituents, such as ambient moisture, from the melt. There is no positive addition of water in the present claims. Although the Examiner argues that the present claims do not exclude the positive addition of water to the process, the present specification on page 12 clearly teaches away from the positive addition of water to the process of the present invention and, as such, the Examiner cannot allege motivation for the addition of a constituent, i.e., water, which is clearly not taught or suggested as being positively added in the process of the present claims. Thus, there would be no motivation for the worker of ordinary skill in the art to incorporate the devolatilization process of Vetter et al. into the process of Lehmann et al.

Finally, in Claim 12 copolymer a) positively recites inclusion of 1 to 50% by weight of methacrylic acid in the copolymer, which means that the polymer of the claim is an anionic copolymer in contrast to the polymers of Vetter et al., i.e., poly(methylmethacrylate) or poly-(methacrylalkylimide) polymers, which are not anionic. Therefore, copolymer of Claim 12 differs significantly from the copolymers of Vetter et al. The claims distinguish over the combination of references.

It is submitted that Claims 1, 2, 3-8 and 10-13 are allowable and such action is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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